

Kentucky Public Postsecondary Education Diversity Plan

Framework for Diversity

Executive Summary

The focus on diversity has broadened in the Commonwealth. Belief in the necessity to ensure access and equal opportunity for all citizens is a strong component of the public postsecondary system's effort to recommit itself to equal opportunity and diversity as both a practical and ethical imperative. When the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights released Kentucky from the remedial planning process, the Council on Postsecondary Education reaffirmed the importance of diversity as a core strategy in its strategic planning process and directed its Committee on Equal Opportunities, in collaboration with the public institutions, to develop a statewide diversity plan.

Postsecondary education believes that diversity is directly linked to excellence and the economic future of citizens. The belief is supported by comprehensive sociological research that reveals extensive linkages, global advantages and benefits at educational institutions where equity and diversity are core values.

As stated in *Gratz, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75321 (E.D. Mich.) and *Grutter, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75928 (E.D. Mich.) "Institutions of higher education have an obligation first and foremost, to create the best possible educational environment for the young adults whose lives are likely to be significantly changed during their years on campus. Specific objectives may vary from one institution to another, but all efforts must be directed to ensuring an optimal educational environment for these young people who are at a critical stage of development that will complete the foundation for how they will conduct their lives." Kentucky seeks to continue the push toward opportunity and excellence for all citizens.

Diversity as a Primary Objective

In proposing a statewide framework the Council and public postsecondary institutions are defining access, equal opportunity and diversity as a necessary ingredient for educational excellence and economic prosperity for its citizens. Achieving excellence is partially dependent on an environment that fully supports and engages diverse cultures and perspectives. Such an environment supports academic excellence and the idea of social justice.

The plan envisions diversity and equal opportunity intertwined with the work and lives of students, faculty and staff. The mission, core values, and diversity will infuse and inform thinking, policies, and practices throughout the system.

Changed by diversity, access and equal opportunity, the system and each institution will be looked on by others for their commitment to social justice, policies, practices, climate, affirmation and support of educational excellence through inclusion and diversity.

Mission, Shared Vision and Responsibility

To achieve the transformation the system aspires to, it must be recognized that all of the access and equal opportunity objectives, values, and practices are interconnected or interdependent, and that all share the responsibility to achieve them.

The concept of diversity in Kentucky has broadened immensely. The definition of diversity goes beyond race and ethnicity. To this end, the Council on Postsecondary Education and public institutions through integrative restructuring will underscore the statewide commitment to access, equal opportunity and diversity; both administratively and academically. Restructuring, inclusive of diversity plan implementation at each postsecondary institution advances the system's capacity for leadership and national achievement. The framework in this plan will build the kind of infrastructure that will sustain past achievements and move the system to a higher level of leadership and achievement. Through coordinated efforts and resources a common but flexible path is being developed to create and implement a framework for diversity plans. What follows are expectations that the framework will address:

- Establish a framework that aligns system-wide and institutional diversity policies.
- Require institutional actions that describe access and equal opportunity for students, faculty and staff that address the educational and work environment.
- Hold the system and institutions accountable by using metrics that are specific and measurable.
- Recognize that equal opportunity is essential to social justice for all.

Framework Expectations

- Establish a framework that aligns system-wide and institutional diversity policies.
- Require institutional actions that describe access and equal opportunity for students, faculty and staff that address the educational and work environment.
- Hold the system and institutions accountable by using standards that are specific and measurable.
- Recognize that equal opportunity is essential to social justice for all.

Core Values, Guiding Principles and New Framework

Ten core values inform and direct our work on access, equal opportunity and diversity. The values are applicable to the work on each institution campus. They underlie and inform every aspect of the diversity framework. Building on the core values, the framework identifies seven areas for initial focus and attention, and a number of proposed action items within each area. The Council's Committee on Equal Opportunities in collaboration with the institutions will guide the implementation of these action items. The plan serves as an institutional framework for action, a dynamic evolving framework, and a system umbrella. The following values shape the priorities and will guide decisions for the Commonwealth's vision of diversity.

- Value diversity as a vital component in the state's educational and economic development.
- Continue to focus on access and equal opportunity for African Americans and underserved groups that have experienced historical patterns of discrimination and exclusion.
- Respect personal uniqueness and differences.
- Encourage intellectual and creative freedom.
- Challenge stereotypes and promote awareness and inclusion.
- Prepare students to live and work in a diverse global society.
- Promote access and high expectations and support student success.
- Support community engagement, civic responsibility, and service that advance diverse and underserved population groups.
- Implement assessment and accountability measures that document the progress and outcomes of diversity efforts.
- Foster a campus climate that supports diversity through collegiality, collaboration, and civility.

Introduction and Background

The Kentucky public postsecondary education system access and equal opportunity planning process “the Kentucky plan” set in motion a historic process for visioning a system that is performing at a level at or above the national average of public postsecondary education institutions. A new approach toward that goal has emerged and is energizing the system to pursue the achievement of that goal.

With the anticipated changes in demographics and the end of historical remedial planning, diversity planning is even more critical. Continual increases in diversity will have major implications for the public postsecondary education system, particularly as additional students of color enter the educational pipeline. Planning today will ensure that as the demographics shift the system will be prepared to address the challenges of serving an increasingly diverse population.

What We Mean by Diversity

In this framework is an overarching vision for developing strategies, programs, and services that advance diversity and address the needs of diverse populations, particularly those most affected by institutional and systemic inequity and exclusion. Educational diversity, for purposes of this framework, is an essential characteristic in building an inclusive community of people with varied human differences and world views that honor and respect those differences in a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for living, learning and working.

In identifying diversity as a core value the framework commits to building a culture of excellence that is grounded in principles of access, equal opportunity, and social justice that fundamentally affirms and embraces the multiple identities, values, ethnic and racial diversity, and cultural practices. We will support the following individuals and groups within the proposed framework.

- Racial and ethnic minorities, including historically underrepresented groups.
- First-generation students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Individuals who may encounter barriers based on national origin or ethnicity.

The Value of Diversity

The Council on Postsecondary Education believes that institutions of higher education have an obligation, first and foremost, to create the best possible educational environment for students whose lives are likely to be significantly changed during their years on campus. It continues a mission-driven effort to promote increased access among historically underserved students. Specific objectives may vary from one institution to another, but all efforts must be directed to ensuring an optimal educational environment for students who are at a critical stage of development that will complete the foundation for how they will conduct their lives. (See Appendix A.)

Commitments and Action Steps

Diversity Action Plan Commitments and Initiatives (under construction)

In proposing a new model for reframing access, equal opportunity and diversity, we recognize that postsecondary education is a critical pathway for advancing individual self-knowledge, world knowledge and ideas, preparation for future leadership, and promoting economic development. Significant equal opportunity and diversity work is already underway that will be sustainable with a more comprehensive effort. Seven commitments inform and drive the framework on equal opportunity and diversity.

1. Develop leadership capacity that undergirds equal opportunity and diversity at the state level and at institutions.

Transformational leadership by faculty, staff, students, and administrators throughout the organization will implement comprehensive change by mirroring the diversity commitment to the campus through word and deed.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Clearly articulate commitment to diversity in mission and strategic plan.
2. Champion and reflect diversity among senior leadership.
3. Work with existing leadership programs for students, faculty and staff to develop and sustain the capacity for addressing issues of equal opportunity and diversity.
4. Create and sustain both formal and informal mechanisms for those engaged in equal opportunity and diversity work to interact, collaborate, and share best practices.

2. Engage collaborators to develop and implement strategies to achieve recruitment, enrollment, retention, and success objectives for ethnic and racial minority students.

The goal of performing at or above the national average for educational attainment by year 2020 is reachable through diversity infused efforts throughout the postsecondary system aimed at improving student preparedness, enhancing student support services, and ensuring a welcoming and supportive environment.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Expand, support, and develop academic bridge programs for majority and diverse students who need additional academic support and seek opportunities for success.
2. Strengthen programs aimed at undergraduate admissions, enrollment, and financial aid.
3. Strengthen graduate student recruitment, retention, and pipeline.
4. Develop and strengthen programs aimed at the academic and personal development of diverse undergraduate and graduate students.
5. Expand student transfers from 2 to 4-year institutions.
6. Support and strengthen statewide pre-college and community outreach efforts.
7. Use qualitative and quantitative metrics based on continuous improvement principles for evaluating strategies to enhance student success.

3. Engage internal and external collaborators in programs that support the recruitment, retention, and success of diverse faculty, staff, and administrators.

Employing and advancing a diverse faculty and staff is fundamental to transformation, and may be the most challenging. Success is predicated upon diversity in disciplines, departments, and leadership.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Actively seek support from internal and external communities, alumni, university, and community leadership for efforts to diversify faculty and staff (build on best practices).
2. Support and develop programming that prepares all faculty and staff to teach and work in diverse environments with diverse students, clientele, colleagues, and community members.
3. Develop formal and informal opportunities for conversations, collaborations, and resource sharing among majority, diverse faculty and staff.
4. Develop incentives and accountability measures to ensure compliance and good-faith efforts to engage with diversity issues.
5. Encourage recruitment and search processes, mentoring diverse faculty and staff, working on climate issues, and developing and supporting cohorts of diverse graduate students going into the professoriate.

4. Improve campus climate for diverse students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Minimize the burden on individuals (particularly marginalized or underrepresented populations and cultures) to take primary responsibility for diversity work. A climate of respect and inclusivity empowers the individual's ability to perform to their full potential.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Encourage the integration of diversity throughout the curricula.
2. Infuse diversity into service learning, civic engagement and experiential learning.
3. Develop opportunities for cross cultural education.
4. Support and create community-based opportunities that are collaborative and mutually beneficial, and that widen and clears pathways between the institution and external community.
5. Create research based faculty and staff workshops and symposia that incorporate universal instructional design principles to develop pedagogies and curricula that are inclusive and respectful across cultural communities with the goal of improving the educational experience and success rates for students.

5. Support assessment, accountability, and collaboration through the application of continuous improvement and innovative metrics, technology and communication tools.

Policies, practices and their outcomes with regard to access, equal opportunity, and diversity efforts must be transparent and measurable, and must be communicated effectively and regularly to all constituents, using up-to-date and accessible communications technologies and media.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Build on existing assessment and accountability tools that can be used to support equal opportunity and diversity objectives.
2. Support and develop additional metrics that are meaningful to the constituencies with whom postsecondary education works to eliminate barriers in order to ensure that equity and diversity initiatives are resulting in progress toward articulated objectives.
3. Create metrics to evaluate opportunities to promote equity and diversity programs, services, and projects to current and potential donors.
4. Build metrics that consider issues such as student enrollment, success of students requiring developmental education, awards of certificates and degrees, time to degree, graduates pursuing graduate education, increase in faculty, staff, and executives.
5. Create opportunities to use technology to support students enrolled in distance learning programs and provide metrics to assess their success.

Plan Implementation

The Council on Postsecondary Education through its Committee on Equal Opportunities oversees equal opportunity and diversity planning. The Committee: 1) develops, in conjunction with state-supported institutions, a statewide equal opportunities plan; 2) monitors and ensures the continuation of equal opportunity efforts; 3) advises the Council on institutional status under KRS 164.020(19) and 13 KAR 2:060; 4) evaluates campus environments relative to equal opportunity; and, 5) makes recommendations to the Council on programs and activities promoting equal opportunity.

6. Reaffirm the long-standing commitment of the Commonwealth to ensuring that Kentucky African American students are fully represented at the state-supported colleges and universities.

Diversity as a concept is broader than any one racial or ethnic classification. However, Kentucky's past history of operating a de jure segregated system of higher education requires vigilance in ensuring that recent gains in enrollment and retention for resident African American students are monitored as a distinct component of the larger diversity plan. The continuing commitment to resident African Americans in no way diminishes or detracts from the broader goal of diversity, but rather complements it.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Encourage institutions to develop measurable goals and objectives for enrollment and retention of resident African American students.
 2. Continue to assess the enrollment, graduation, and success of African American students as part of the broader measurement and accountability process.
- 7. Developmental education programs and policy (under construction)**
- Will policy decisions regarding developmental education affect expectations related to increasing diversity on college and university campuses? Awaiting further data analysis.

Summary and Conclusion

Institutional Plan Development and Adoption (under construction)

It is the intent of the Council on Postsecondary Education that following adoption of a statewide diversity plan, action plans at the campus level, institution plans will be developed. Upon adoption of action plans at the institution level, appropriate portions of those plans will be folded into the statewide plan by the Council. A primary goal of diversity planning is to strengthen the current programs and to create new opportunities that will propel the Commonwealth more quickly toward its overall educational attainment goal for year 2020. Each of the seven commitments is aligned to accomplish this overall objective. The visioning process is the means by which institutions are brought into and engage with diversity on a regular basis. Outcomes are changes in the postsecondary community, institution and campus environment, continued awareness of diversity as a key part of the lives of citizens, and the makeup of students, faculty and staff.

Follow-up and Revisions (under construction)

The diversity plan is a five year effort. A summative evaluation of the diversity plan will occur at the end of the five years and an external evaluator may be contracted to evaluate the processes and outcomes of the diversity plan. The evaluator will make recommendations for future diversity directions. The evaluations along with any institutional self-studies will provide the context and foundation for revisions to the diversity plan. Generally, an area to be researched is the criteria by which the plan defines and evaluates academic success.

Background

The United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) made a finding in 1979 that “the Commonwealth of Kentucky, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, had failed to eliminate the vestiges of its former de jure racially dual system of public higher education.” A plan was developed to meet the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The OCR cited Kentucky in three areas: students, employment, and enhancement of Kentucky State University, the state’s historically black university.

The Committee on Equal Opportunities was established by the Governor of Kentucky and the Council on Higher Education, now the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) in 1988 to develop and oversee the implementation of a statewide equal opportunity plan for public postsecondary education. A statewide equal opportunity plan is mandated by KRS 164.202(19), which is intended to improve educational opportunities for Kentuckians and ensure compliance with federal law.

The committee’s charge is to develop and review the plan encompassing the following areas: mission, vision, core values, support programs, students, administrators, faculty, staff, community engagement, and plan objectives and oversight activities. Plan development was accomplished through input from the Council, the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Board, former CPE/CEO members, The Kentucky Department of Education, The State Conference of NAACP, the Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education, the Kentucky State Data Center, the Kentucky Human Rights Commission, student leaders, community leaders, interest groups, institutional constituents and members of the general public who provided factual information and personal perspectives about diversity planning in Kentucky public postsecondary education.

May 1999, the Council (Commonwealth) entered into a partnership with OCR to bring Kentucky into full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the standards established in the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *U.S. v. Fordice*. The *Partnership Agreement* ended December 2008, and the OCR has released the Commonwealth from oversight under the original finding. The Commonwealth is pursuing further access and opportunity by engaging in diversity planning.

One focus of developing a diversity plan is to examine the impact of institutional racial and ethnic diversity on students. The subsequent recommendations will establish a foundation and reflect the Commonwealth’s commitment to diversity. Diversity should change the institution not just students. Diversity and multiculturalism should not be code words for the assimilation of students of color into the dominant culture. Strategic diversity should also reflect an institutional willingness to examine its programs, policies, practices and procedures and how they impact various populations. In expert testimony (Appendix A) supporting *Gratz, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75321 (E.D. Mich.) and *Grutter, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75928 (E.D. Mich.), John Matlock, Gerald Gurin and Katrina Wade-Golden asserts a mission of higher education that is accepted by the courts as:

Institutions of higher education have an obligation first, and foremost, to create the best possible educational environment for the young adults whose lives are likely to be significantly changed during their years on campus. Specific objectives may vary from one institution to another, but all efforts must be directed to ensuring an optimal educational environment for these young people who are at a critical stage of development that will complete the foundation for how they will conduct their lives.

One goal embraced by most colleges and universities is to prepare young people for active participation in our democratic society, which is an increasingly diverse society. As stated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 1995, higher education has both a distinctive responsibility and a precedent setting challenge. Higher education is uniquely positioned, by its mission, values, and dedication to learning, to foster and nourish the habits of heart and mind that Americans need to make diversity work in daily life. We have the opportunity to help our campuses experience engagement across differences as a value and a public good. Our nation's campuses have become a highly visible stage on which the most fundamental questions about difference, equality, and community are being enacted. To this effort, filled with promise and fraught with difficulty, the academy brings indispensable resources: its commitments to the advancement of knowledge and its traditions of dialogue and deliberation across difference as keys to the increase of insight and understanding. (AAC&U, 1995, p. xvi.) Plainly, higher education is obliged both to advance knowledge and to educate those who will become active in the professions and in society. Racial and ethnic differences are relevant to both these goals.

Corporate leaders have reinforced this mission by confirming that the business community is looking to colleges and universities to produce highly valued cognitive and social skills in the educated workforce: ability to work effectively in groups with colleagues of diverse backgrounds, openness to new ideas and perspectives, and empathy with other workers' perspectives (Bikson & Law, 1994). These are qualities that higher education institutions are best equipped to create and nurture, if they are diverse. Indeed, it is development of these qualities of democratic intelligence that educator Lee Knepfelkamp (1998) claims is the primary mission of colleges and universities.

That colleges and universities have an obligation to choose carefully the kind of student body that will create the best learning environment for all their students is fundamental to achieving these goals. The vitality, stimulation, and educational potential of a college is, quite obviously, directly related to the makeup of its student body, and, as I [sic] will argue on the basis of abundant research findings, diversity is a critically important factor in creating the richly varied educational experience that helps students learn and prepares them for participation in a democracy that is characterized by diversity.

Also, Matlock, Gurin and Wade-Golden noted that their analysis consistently confirmed that racial diversity and student involvement in activities related to diversity have a direct and strong effect on learning and the way students conduct themselves in later life, including disrupting prevailing patterns of racial separation. They noted:

- Because students in late adolescence and early adulthood are at a critical stage of development, diversity (racial, economic, demographic, and cultural) is crucially important in enabling them to become conscious learners and critical thinkers, and in preparing them to become active participants in a democratic society. Universities are ideal institutions to foster such development.
- Students learn more and think in deeper, more complex ways in a diverse educational environment.
- Education plays a foundational role in a democracy by equipping students for meaningful participation. Students educated in diverse settings are better able to participate in a pluralistic democracy.

The statewide plan encourages institutions to not exempt any campus unit from the diversity plan strategic diversity planning, in order to have sustained success, has to touch the entire system and campus; and, communicate the importance of diversity to the campus community. Lack of clear communication or inconsistent messages to the campus community can convey the message that diversity is merely tolerated. For example, how is the importance of campus diversity introduced to students, faculty and staff; what impact does diversity have on the curriculum and academic priorities; how are diversity successes and achievements celebrated and communicated to the campus and external communities are all important questions that the plan clearly addresses.